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TAGS: PGOV PREL KPKO ASEC IV
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: NEW FORCES AND POLITICAL
OPPOSITION UNITE AGAINST GBAGBO

REF: ABIDJAN 922

Classified By: Poloff Phaedra Gwyn for reasons
1.4 b&d

¶1. (U) On August 17, leaders of the political opposition and the rebel New Forces (FN) met in Daoukro (home of ex-president Bedie) to consult on the current political situation. All the major party leaders were present: ex-president Henri Konan Bedie, leader of the PDCI (Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire); ex-prime minister Alassane Ouattara, leader of the RDR (Rally of Democratic Republicans), Guillaume Soro, leader of the FN; Mabri Toikeusse, leader of the UDPICI (Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire); and Anaky Kobenan, leader of the MFA(Movement of Forces of the Future). After the four-hour meeting, the leaders released a communique, outlining their position.

¶2. (SBU) The opposition leaders condemned President Gbagbo as solely responsible for the current deadlock in the peace process, and rejected any extension of his term in office beyond October 31. They rejected the new procedures announced by Prime Minister Banny for the mobile courts (audiences foraines -- AF) seeking to register undocumented Ivoirians and foreigners and jointly endorsed the ultimatum issued August 14 by the RHDP (Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace), the grouping of the parties of four out of the five leaders represented at this meeting, that Banny must rescind these new procedures within eight days. They rejected both the assertion by President Gbagbo and his FPI (Ivoirian Popular Front) party that the INS (National Statistical Institute) should be in charge of preparing the voter registration list, and Prime Minister Banny's plan to put one operator in charge of preparing both the national identification list and the voter registration list. They noted that they had sent letters of protest to South African President Mbeki on both of these issues. They declared that they would only accept an electoral list approved by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI). They condemned the pro-FPI bias of the media and called on Prime Minister Banny to correct it. They called for sanctions against FPI leader Affi Nguessan for blocking the peace process, and they called for a resumption of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and military-to-military dialogue "within a new framework." They took the international community to task for not speaking with one voice and for remaining silent in the face of President Gbagbo's actions to defy it.

¶3. (C) Comment: This is the most comprehensive agreement we have seen among all of these major opposition leaders. In the past, and in particular last year as October approached, the political opposition and the FN have preferred to remain slightly aloof from each other and stake out their own ground, on most issues taking similar but not always identical positions. For example, up to now the FN had not endorsed the RHDP's ultimatum to Prime Minister Banny on the AF's, and the RHDP had not spoken out in favor of the FN's

proposed "new framework" for DDR and military-to-military talks. Clearly they are hoping that a united opposition front will increase their leverage, and in particular will make it more difficult for the international community to endorse another extension of President Gbagbo's term in office. Perhaps they might also be preparing the ground to propose a consensus opposition candidate to replace Banny as Prime Minister. In any case, they have little real leverage on any of these issues. End Comment.

Hooks